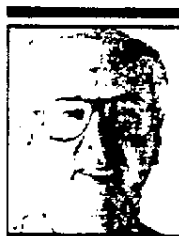


# Homestead showcases Indy's best

## Rival IRL clouds the sport's future

Rumblings a week ago that the CART IndyCar series' inaugural U.S. 500 at Michigan International Speedway had been canceled emanated not from Detroit but from Indianapolis.

Wonder of wonders.



GARY LONG

But the U.S. 500 will, in fact, be run May 26, same day as the Indianapolis 500, barring an absolutely unforeseen capitulation by Indianapolis Motor Speedway President Tony George in his ill-conceived but steadfast designs on control of all Indy-car racing.

The war between George's fledgling Indy Racing League and CART, distasteful to most and damag-

ing to all, continues.

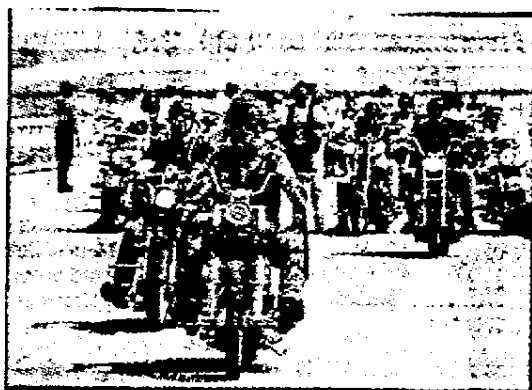
Peace has not been declared, and any chance that an accord could be reached in time to salvage the 1996 Indy 500 as a true world-class race is less now than it was a week ago.

Al Unser Jr. will be at Michigan, not Indy. So will Michael Andretti, and Bobby Rahal, and Emerson Fittipaldi, and Paul Tracy and . . . well, just about everybody who's anybody in this branch of auto racing. If that message hasn't sunk in yet, get used to the idea.

The spectacle May 26 will still be at Indy, at least for one more year. Few are ready to release ticket rights to the world's most famous race as long as there's a chance that they'll want them again in 1997. But the world-class racing will be at Michigan.

And a PPG CART IndyCar series that can stand alone without Indy if team owners will hold firm against George's takeover bid is ready and eager to put politics aside and its 1996 product on display at Metro-Dade Homestead Motorsports Complex this weekend.

The cars and stars of *past* Indy 500s will strut their high-speed, high-wire stuff in the *Marlboro* Grand Prix of Miami on Homestead's 1.51-mile oval at 1:30 p.m. Sunday (ABC-TV).



CHUCK FADELY / Herald Staff

**LEADER OF THE PACK:** A large group of bikers tour the Homestead track Thursday. Deciding to join them were race-car drivers Emerson Fittipaldi, Paul Tracy and Rick Mears.

ing a check presentation to Homestead Mayor Tad DeMilly. The \$834,800 was a lease payment for the busy months of November, January and February.

Sometimes it takes outsiders to appreciate what locals have seen grow by stages. John Szymanski, a vice president of Newman-Haas Racing and Haas Auto Imports, has visited racing facilities around the globe. He saw the Homestead complex for the first time Thursday.

"This is the 21st Century," Szymanski said. "I'm overwhelmed. This will change the way motorsports is viewed. It's not only beautiful. It's user-friendly. If you really want to impress a sponsor, this is where you'll bring him."

Racing, after all, is fueled by the corporate world. And possibly George's threat has mobilized CART's sponsors as well as its directors.

Today, Honda, Miller Brewing, Target and others will add their names to the list of companies forking over \$200,000 each in support of the U.S. 500, a CART production. These are many of the same sponsors upon whom George counted to force team owners to enter IRL events just to be able to race in the Indianapolis 500.

Make no mistake. They want to be at Indianapolis. Sponsors who base multimillion-dollar marketing campaigns on auto racing's appeal are well aware of Indy's worldwide impact. But they have stopped well short of telling owners Roger Penske and Carl Haas and Chip Ganassi they have to enter Indy under conditions set by George to benefit and promote a rival IRL.

### Talking over golf

CART President Andrew Craig affirmed that George and team owner Roger Penske did converse at Pebble Beach, where both participated in a golf pro-am. George, whose reservation of 25 of 33 Indy 500 starting spots for IRL teams prompted the current impasse, floated the idea of expanding the Indy field to 42 cars to entice the CART teams to Indy.

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